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ABSTRACT

This paper considers how the services of paraprofessionals might be used in teaching and learning situations, especially reading instruction. The paper points out that teachers need to observe each child and notice if modifications need to be made in teaching reading, a situation that becomes quite difficult for the regular teacher to determine when he/she is teaching an entire classroom of students. It suggests that the regular teacher can do the evaluating of each student's reading level, while the paraprofessional can involve the other students in purposeful reading activities. The paper finds that the paraprofessional (especially in the case of retired teachers) can assist the teacher in basal reader use, especially in developing word recognition skills in students. In the case of individualized reading, the paper notes that retired teachers might fill responsibilities of working within the framework of basal reader use and individualized reading. The paper cites nine differences between basal reader and individualized reading philosophy, differences which paraprofessionals should be aware of. (NKA)

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Paraprofessionals in Reading.

by Marlow Ediger

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PARAPROFESSIONALS IN READING

Paraprofessionals have not been used to the maximum degree in the school setting. For example, there are retired teachers who would like to give a few hours each day to help pupils achieve more optimally. They tend not to be asked for their services. If retired teachers services are used, they have had training and experience to work with children. These teachers have generally passed the test of being good examples for children and their services are needed in school. How might the services of paraprofessionals be used in teaching and learning situations, especially reading instruction?

Assisting Pupils in Reading

Pupils are at different levels of achievement in reading. The child's reading level must be determined so he/she is working on the instructional, not frustrational level of instruction. An informal reading inventory (IRI) may be taken of the pupil. Here, the teacher may take the basal reading series presently being used in the school setting. The basal need to be arranged from easiest to gradually more complex, or by graded levels. The child needs to start where he/she is comfortable n reading and progresses until the approximate 95% of words are identified correctly in the sequentially chosen selection of the reader. Thus, if a pupil identifies 95 out of 100 running words correctly from a third grade reader, he/she has met one dimension of determining his/her approximate reading level. The second dimension is to ask questions pertaining to comprehension for these 100 running words. If the child can answer three out of four questions correctly, that book should be on the pupil's present reading level of instruction. From that point on with quality instruction, the pupil should be able to make optimal prioresses with good teaching. These are approximate figures; teachers must always study different approaches and texts to improve reading instruction. The reading curriculum needs to be flexible, not carved in stone. New insights, new information, new research, and new techniques, might well make for changes to be made in the reading curriculum for a child. Teachers need to observe each child and notice if modifications need to be made in teaching reading to children. it becomes quite difficult for the regular teacher to determine reading levels of pupils when he/she is teaching an entire classroom of pupils and the one pupil at a time needs to be consulted pertaining to determining

the personal reading level. The paraprofessional may help in doing this. Ideally, other pupils should not listen to the one reading the 100 running words (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Ten). Accurate records need to be kept pertaining to which selection is being read by a child as well as which words were missed during the oral reading. The one assessing pupil achievement in reading the 100 running words well might wish to notice the kinds of errors made in order to do diagnosis and remediation. The kinds of errors made might well include the following:

1. omitting words.
2. substituting words.
3. mispronouncing words.
4. rereading a word or phrase even though the original response was correct.
5. hesitating on a word longer than three seconds.
6. failure to identify a word.
7. skipping a line.
8. failure to read in thought units.
9. omitting punctuation marks while reading.
10. inserting unnecessary punctuation marks (Ediger, 2001, Chapter Fifteen).

The regular teacher should do the evaluating of pupils in reading placement while the paraprofessional has assigned tasks to have the other children perform. If the paraprofessional is a retired teacher, then he/she may evaluate pupil placement in reading. While pupils individually are being evaluated for placement purposes, the other learners should be involved in purposeful reading activities, not drill and practice for the sake of doing so.

Basal Reader Use

Many schools use basal readers as a means of reading instruction. Paraprofessionals, especially retired teachers, will be very familiar with basal reading philosophy. How might the paraprofessional assist the reading teacher in basal reader use?

1. pronounce orally, unrecognized words when pupils fail to recognize words in reading silently.
2. help pupils with phonetic elements as pupils read along and cannot identify unknown words. There are consistent sound/symbol relationships which pupils can use in word recognition.
3. assist pupils with syllabication skills which are consistent in the English language.

4. aid learners to use context clues to identify unknown words.
5. guide pupils to increase their fund of an increased sight vocabulary.

The above named word recognition skills are vital for pupils to acquire. They should be stressed as needed and not for the sake of learning them (See Harris and Sipay, 1985).

In addition to word recognition techniques which need mastering, pupils should also be skillful in interpreting content read. The following comprehension skills are indeed worthy to use"

1. reading for factual information.
2. reading for a sequence of ideas.
3. reading to develop conceptual meaning.
4. reading to achieve a main idea.
5. reading to follow directions.
6. reading to analyze subject matter.
7. reading to engage in creative thought.
8. reading to synthesize subject matter.
9. reading to apply information.
10. reading for pleasure (See Carlo, 1996).

Individualized Reading

The basal reading program might well be supplemented with individualized reading. Here, the classroom needs an ample number of library books written on diverse genres as well as being on different reading levels. With appropriate introductions made by the teacher, the child may choose a library book to read on his/her own reading level and based on personal preferences for subject matter to read. Choices might also be made on the preferred genre of books. The child is the chooser of what to read. If a pupil cannot settle down to read a library book, the teacher may assist in making the selection for that child. The pupil also chooses his/her own library books based on personal reading levels. After a library book has been completed, the pupil needs to have a conference with the teacher to notice reading progress.

Contents read may be discussed with questions raised by the teacher. The pupil reveals comprehension by answering the queries. Teachers should record results of each dated conference. Comparisons may be made of earlier versus later conferences to notice changes in pupil reading behavior.

Retired teachers might fill responsibilities of working within the framework of basal reader use and individualized reading.

Paraprofessionals should be well aware of the differences between basal reader and individualized reading philosophy. Among others these included the following:

1. basals stress whole class instruction, small group work, as well as selected individual endeavors whereas individualized reading stresses individual endeavors almost exclusively.

2. basal readers are chosen by the teachers who use the text in teaching and learning situations. The names of the authors of the text and the stories they chose for inclusion as well as the accompanying manual with their teaching suggestions are all selected as a full program of reading instruction. The basal still makes room for a supplementary set of experiences such as the individualized reading program. There are problems of management and time when combining the two sets of reading programs. Otherwise, they are compatible.

3. basal readers are more rigid in philosophy of instruction such as being closed in teaching methodology to the stories and manual of the basal. Individualized reading is more open-ended in that there is no manual for teachers to follow and the teacher is left to determine the objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures to ascertain learner progress.

4. basal readers provide common learnings for all pupils whereas individualized reading provides experiences based upon what each pupil has selected to read. The scope of the individualized reading curriculum then is as broad as the sum total of pupils within a classroom, whereas the scope of the basal reading curriculum basically is as broad as the contents of the stories therein and what teachers/pupils bring to the discussions of inherent ideas. Both have a broadened scope when the two reading programs are combined.

5. sequence in individualized reading depends upon the individual pupil selecting ordered books to read. Thus, with choices made of library books read, the reader sequences his/her own order of experiences. In basal reader use, the basal determines the sequence of stories read within the class or group. The teacher might digress a little, but is largely dependent upon the basal to provide the objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures within a certain sequence or order.

6. the interests of the pupil personally is the key to a successful program of instruction in individualized reading. The interest factor in learning then is strong whereby the pupil chooses sequential books to read in individualized reading.

Personal interest in reading a library book is a strong determiner of success in a pupil learning to read and continue to improve in reading. In basal reader use, it is up to the teacher to stimulate interest in reading if the pupil is originally lacking this trait for reading a story in the basal.

7. each pupil with teacher assistance should be heavily involved in discussing the contents of the completed book in individualized reading. Discussions occur after the completed reading of a library book on a one to one basis involving pupil and teacher. When basals are used in daily discussions, the teacher chooses which questions to discuss and the sequence of learning opportunities to follow.

8. openness is a key concept to emphasize in individualized reading. The teacher largely ascertains his/her own methods of teaching. A flexible framework for individualized reading is advocated, but beyond that an open ended approach in teaching reading exists. Contrasting with individualized reading, the basal approach may be highly centralized depending upon how much the teacher emphasizes using the accompanying manual of instruction. With closely following the manual, the teaching procedures become quite formal and specific.

9. careful recording must be made of which books the pupil has completed sequentially in individualized reading. The kinds of questions raised of the pupil to check comprehension need also to be recorded. Which kinds of errors a child makes in reading aloud to the teacher also need to be recorded. Growth over previous recording needs to be made by the teacher. Improvement is a key component in individualized reading. With basal reader use, the teacher needs to observe each pupil's attentiveness in the lesson presentation. Additional things to observe include the following:

* how well each pupil participates in discussions.
* how well a pupil is doing in word recognition.
* how well each pupil is able to work harmoniously with others.
* how well a pupil is doing in listening during the time background information is being presented as well as throughout the ongoing reading lessons.
* how well the pupil is doing in projects made pertaining to ongoing lesson lessons.
* how well the pupil engages in higher levels of cognition, pertaining to story content.
* how well the pupil reds fluently in though units.
* how well the pupil reads related books pertaining to

story content found in the basal.

* how well the pupil does in finding reading materials to read in spare time.

* how well the pupil is able to relate subject matter from diverse academic disciplines (Rubin, 1983).

The beliefs pertaining to individualized reading are quite different from basal reader advocates when making comparisons. The two approaches in reading instruction possess different philosophies of education involving the learner. Individualized reading advocates say that pupils are in the best position to determining what to read. They possess personal interests in content and have a unique reading achievement level from others in the classroom. Pupils to are in the best position to pace their very own rte of achievement. Advocates of basal readers believe that teachers can build interest, as well as background knowledge, within pupils for reading a given selection. One of the purposes of teaching is to take care of deficiencies which pupils may have in any subject matter area.

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